



Coping with COVID: Mental Health and Social Isolation in the time of COVID-19

Presented by the PAIMI Advisory Council
(PAC) to Disability Rights Florida

Annette Smith, PAC Chair

Dhaima Chin, LCSW, PAC Member

Shira Collings, PAC Member

Kathryn Strobach, Disability Rights
Florida Attorney

Mission



Disability Rights Florida advocates, educates, investigates, and litigates to protect and advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, self-determination and choices for all people with disabilities.

What is Protection & Advocacy (P&A)?



- In 1975 Congress created a system of Protection and Advocacy agencies to protect the rights of people with disabilities.
- Congress mandated that every U.S. State and territory have an official protection and advocacy agency.
- Disability Rights Florida is the P&A system for our state.

The Need for P&A's

People with disabilities were:

- Segregated from society
- Locked in institutions
- Found isolated at home with absolutely no services
- Provided no education
- Abused, neglected and forgotten

Who P&As Serve

- Individuals with mental illness
- Individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI) or other neurological impairment
- Individuals with developmental/intellectual disability
- Individuals with physical disability

What P&As Do

- P&As can go anywhere people with disabilities are provided with direct services.
- P&As have the authority to provide legal representation and other advocacy services to all people with disabilities.
- P&As help ensure that people with disabilities are treated equally, with dignity and respect.
- P&As provide **free** and **confidential** services.

Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI)



- The P&As are mandated to protect and advocate for the rights of people with mental illness by investigating reports of abuse and neglect in facilities and in the community.
- We receive funding under a federal grant called PAIMI to do this work.

PAIMI Advisory Council (PAC)



PAIMI Advisory Council Members Act as a Link Between the P&A and the Mental Health Community:

- Assist the P&A in identifying issues that are of most importance to the mental health community.
- Provide feedback to the P&A staff and the Board of Directors to develop the annual objectives and priorities for the PAIMI program.
- Educate the public about the mission and purpose of the P&A.

Coping with COVID

Mental Health and Social Isolation
in the time of COVID-19



What is Quarantine?

Quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms.



Loneliness vs Isolation

How can you distinguish between the two?

Loneliness: a person's needs may not be met and they can be completely isolated by others and feel completely lonely.

Isolation: being physically separated from others. A person can be physically isolated and not lonely.



Effects of Quarantine

- Anxiety
- Low mood
- Depression
- Symptoms related to post traumatic stress
- Isolation of those found to be infected
- Distress associated with having the virus or a family member having the virus
- Grief for those who may have lost a loved one to the virus
- Loss of income, housing instability, and food insecurity
- Childcare issues

Challenges that might affect patients with existing mental health issues

- Longer durations of quarantine have been associated with posttraumatic stress symptoms, avoidance behaviors, and anger
- Quarantine status has also been associated with frustration at poor or insufficient public
- Not having adequate supplies or access to healthcare, increased
- Stigma and rejection from others, boredom and a sense of isolation from the world, and
- Greater fears of infecting family members than those who are not quarantined

Challenges that might affect patients with existing mental health issues (continued)

- Financial loss has also been shown to result in serious distress and risk for negative psychological symptoms such as anger and anxiety.
- Having to depend on families for financial support has been shown to be particularly difficult and a risk factor for conflict, PTSD, and depression

How Can You Help?

- Check in on them regularly
- Empathizing with stress reactions
- Help identify coping with distress



Coping Skills

- Calming actions such as breathing exercises, meditation, exercise, stretching, yoga, prayer, music, writing in a journal.
- Engaging in satisfying or rewarding activities.
- Volunteering using safety measures.



Tips to reduce negative consequences associated with social isolation during COVID-19

- Maintain a routine
- Be positive
- Breathe
- Meditate
- Limit screen time (News)
- Stay connected (Social Media)
- Get help (Professional)
- Utilize Coping Skills



Things to Look Out For

- Avoid alcohol consumption to relax
- Excessive exposure to the news, particularly prior to sleep
- Less extreme ways of thinking, such as:
 - “Bad things might happen” or “ Nothing good ever happens to me”
- Changes in moods
- Changes in appetites
- Sleep Disturbances

What Are Some Things to Avoid During Quarantine?

- Limit watching, reading, or listening to certain things that may trigger negative emotions.
- Stay connected to other through social media.
- Introduce activities, and self care plans into your daily schedule to stay balanced.

Resources

- CDC Hotline – 1-800-232-4636
- Mental Health - 1-800-950-6264
- National Suicide -1-800-273-8255
- Crisis Text Line – “Hello” to 741741
- FIU Helping Families During COVID-19:
<https://ccf.fiu.edu/coronavirus-resources/index.html>

Mental Health Apps

- “Calm” or “Headspace” – Meditation and Mindfulness
- “Youper” or “Moodpath” – Mood Tracking and Journal
- “Happify” – Cognitive-Behavioral Exercise
- “Gratitude Happiness Journal” – Gratitude Journal & Affirmations

Virtual Peer Support

- **Gainesville Peer Respite** - offering online groups and phone support via warmline: <http://www.gainesvillerespite.org>
- **Peer Support Space of Orlando** - offering online check-ins, game/activity nights, virtual support groups for different topics/issues including parenting, self-care, autism, and LGBTQ identities: <https://peersupportspace.org/covid-response>
- **Many local NAMI and DBSA affiliates** offering support groups via Zoom/phone
- **Comprehensive listing of national virtual peer support groups**, organized by day and by topic / issue: <https://www.westernmassrlc.org/hidden-community-happenings-fix/888-on-line-and-phone-supports-march-2020>

Virtual Peer Support (continued)

- **Western Massachusetts Recovery Learning Community** has a free peer support Discord server (like a group of chat rooms) that is available to people all over the country: <https://tiny.cc/RLCDiscord>
- **Peerly Human** offers virtual peer support groups for suicide, coping with stress, and healing from trauma: <http://peerlyhuman.blogspot.com/p/blog-page.html>
- **Virtual meal support via Instagram** through the account **@covid19eating** support - free meal support for people with eating disorders/disordered eating offered every hour, usually led by a dietician/therapist with their own lived experience

How Can Disability Rights Florida Help You or Your Family with Mental Health Questions or Concerns?



We Provide...

- Information or Referral
- Self-advocacy Support
- Technical Assistance
- Assistance with an Investigation of Abuse, Neglect or Rights Violations
- Negotiation and Mediation Support
- Legal Advice and Representation



Places We Cover

- **Inpatient Treatment Facilities**
 - Crisis Stabilization/Baker Act Units
 - State Hospitals (Public and Private)
- **Congregate Care Facilities**
 - Nursing Homes
 - Assisted Living Facilities
 - Community Based Facilities
 - Jails and Prisons
 - Homeless Shelters
 - Individuals with mental illness recently released from a facility

How P&As Protect Rights Under PAIMI



- Investigate abuse and neglect allegations in facilities
- Investigate rights violations in facilities
- Monitor facilities
- Enforce individuals rights and protections granted under the Constitution and Federal and State Statutes

How to Request Services

1. If you are in an **inpatient facility**, call the Investigations Team directly:
1-800-342-0823, Ext. 3
2. If you are in the **community**, contact our FIRST (Frontline Intake and Referral Service) Line:
 - **1-800-342-0823, Ext. 2**
 - **Online at [DisabilityRightsFlorida.org/Intake](https://www.DisabilityRightsFlorida.org/Intake)**

Information Needed When You Call



- Name and contact information for person needing services – The more specific the better!
 - Patient or resident identifier/number
 - Unit/Room
 - Phone number for contact in facility
- Nature of disability – PAIMI requires we document the existence of “a significant mental illness or emotional impairment, as determined by a mental health professional qualified under the laws and regulations of the State.” 42 U.S. Code § 10802(4)(A).
- Basic demographic information

Information Needed When You Call (continued)

- Know the **specific problem** you need help with.
 - Example: “My mother living in an Assisted Living Facility stopped getting mental health treatment.”
- Think about what **information** you need.
 - Example: “Am I allowed to file a writ of habeas corpus if I don’t think I should be in this crisis stabilization unit?”

Get Involved

- Apply to be on our PAIMI Advisory Council (PAC) (Links on DRF website)
- Apply to be on our Board of Directors
- Help host an event
 - Access the Vote
 - General information about us and what we do
 - Specific topic of your choosing
- Join a coalition
 - Supported Decision-Making

We Want to Hear From You



- Join us on social media!
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/disabilityrightsflorida>
 - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DisabilityRtsFL>
 - YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/DisabilityRightsFL>
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/disabilityrightsfl>
- Join our Mailing List on <https://disabilityrightsflorida.org/>

We Want to Hear from You

- Please take a survey to help us set our goals/priorities/objectives
 - COVID-19 in Institutions:
https://www.disabilityrightsflorida.org/newsroom/story/we_want_to_know_conditions_in_facilities_during_covid_19
 - Annual Survey: <https://bit.ly/drfsurvey3>

Contact Us



DISABILITY RIGHTS FLORIDA
2473 Care Drive, Suite 200
Tallahassee, Florida 32308

800.342.0823 • TDD 800.346.4127

www.DisabilityRightsFlorida.org

Have Questions About Today's Presentation?



Email the PAIMI Advisory Council at:

PAEvent@DisabilityRightsFlorida.org

References

- Reissman, D. B., Watson, P. J., Klomp, R. W., Tanielian, T. L., & Prior, S. D. (2006). Pandemic influenza preparedness: Adaptive responses to an evolving challenge. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.2202/1547-7355.1233>
- Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: Rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*, 395 (10227), 912-920. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)
- Ruggiero, K. J., Yehuda, R., & Scotti, J. R. (2008). Cognitive-behavioral psychology: Implications for disaster and terrorism response. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 23(5), 397-410. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049023X00006130>

References (continued)

- Berkowitz, S., Bryant, R., Brymer, M., Hamblen, J., Jacobs, A., Layne, C., & Watson, P. (2010). Skills for Psychological Recovery: Field operations guide. National Center for PTSD & the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Available on www.nctsn.org and www.ptsd.va.gov
- Hobfoll, S. E., Watson, P. J., Bell, C. C., Bryant, R. A., Brymer, M. J., Friedman, M. J., Friedman, M., Gersons, B. P. R., de Jong, J. T. V. M., Layne, C. M., Maguen, S., Neria, Y.,
- Norwood, A. E., Pynoos, R. S., Reissman, D., Ruzek, J. I., Shalev, A. Y., Solomon, Z., Seinberg, A. M., & Ursano, R. J. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry*, 70(4), 283-315. <https://doi.org/10.1521/psyc.2007.70.4.283>